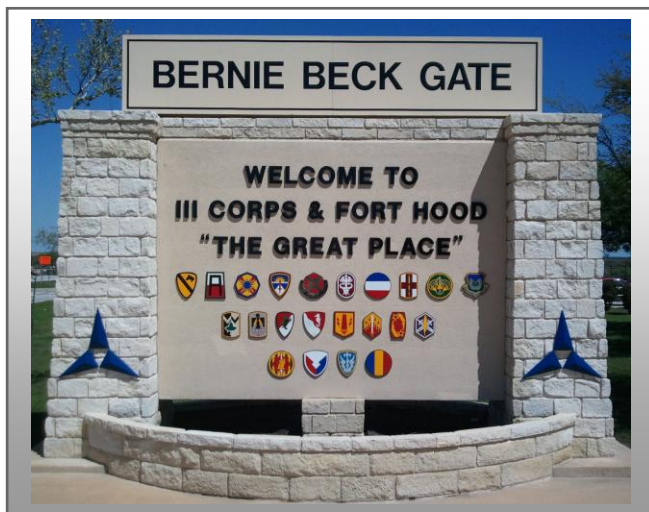


THE FORT HOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE NEWSLETTER

June 14, 2012

**FORT HOOD IS STILL "THE GREAT PLACE"
"THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY BEGINS AT FORT HOOD"**



The information contained in this newsletter is researched and provided by the Fort Hood Customer Service Officer, a Management Analyst of the Plans, Analysis and Integration Office, a Special Staff to the Garrison Commander.

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Improve Like the Airlines by Larry Galler

Most of us would agree that, if we were to vote on one industry that businesses should not use as a model to emulate, the airline industry should be at or near the top of that list.

The airline industry is widely held up as a poster child for disappointing or infuriating customers in so many ways I don't have time or space to list them.

Instead of sitting back and accepting that fact that an overloaded system becomes overwhelmed every time there is a thunderstorm, they are working at adding capacity, developing options, and rethinking their processes.

The starting point of this effort is metrics, documenting and measuring the problems. How much baggage was misplaced at each airport? How many flights were overbooked? Where were flights delayed because planes waiting in line at filled gates?

After accumulating and hopefully understanding this data the effort becomes one of determining what can be done about each issue, who will be responsible for planning it, who will implement it to reduce delay, increase accuracy, and improve overall performance.

Every business has to deal with the same issues. Many times we do very little and just disappoint our customers. They defect to the competition and we never know why because few businesses gather the metrics and seek to understand the depth of the problem.

So I suggest that we all look at our customer service issues and start measuring them. Create metrics from the number of times a telephone rings before it is answered to the number of times a shipment is delayed. Start developing methods of reducing delay, increasing accuracy, and improving overall performance.

Maybe we'll all learn something good from the airlines as they rush to improve before Thanksgiving. Me? I'm going to enjoy my turkey at home in November.

About the Author: Larry Galler coaches and consults with high-performance executives, professionals, and small businesses since 1993. He is the writer of the long-running (every Sunday since November 2001) business column, "Front Lines with Larry Galler" For a free coaching session, email Larry for an appointment - Larry@larrygaller.com. Sign up for his free newsletter at <http://www.larrygaller.com>.

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Never Ask a Question...by Neil Newcomb

The saying, "Never ask a question you don't already know the answer to," has been made famous over the years and people who live by that motto.

But never was it better portrayed than in the movie, *The Verdict*. In this award-winning courtroom drama, the main character, Frank Galvin (played by Paul Newman), is an aging alcoholic who once was a promising attorney and now longs for a second chance.

During a pivotal moment in a trial scene, Galvin asks a key witness an ill-prepared question, and receives an unexpected answer. His whole defense goes into a tailspin and his case is nearly blown. Later on in the film, Galvin recounts the disastrous moment to his mentor, Mickey (Jack Warden).

Mickey gently reminds Galvin, "The first thing you learn in Law School is never ask a question you don't already know the answer to." Cynical words perhaps, but sound advice.

How does this apply to customer service? Well recently I was hired to improve the level of customer service at a large, member-based organization. The CEO was concerned by shrinking customer retention levels and poor customer survey results. Customer numbers and profitability were bleeding, and he had to stop them, fast.

As I assembled the customer service team to talk to them, the CEO interrupted the meeting and took the floor. He said he wanted to conduct a quick and impromptu quiz - a survey of his own.

He handed out scrap paper and asked everyone to be totally honest and grade the organization's customer service on a scale of 1 to 10 - with 10 representing outstanding. On a count of three, everyone (including the CEO) held aloft their score.

But the result was not what the CEO intended. He had never asked the question before - had no real idea of what their viewpoint was likely to be - and maybe now was not the best time to ask. Every member of staff - bar the CEO - was holding up an 8 or above. The CEO was holding a 2.

How could the CEO's view of customer service levels be so out of kilter with the rest of his staff?

The Gap

It is not uncommon to find a gap in customer service understanding between management and staff. Here are three reasons why this can occur:

1. The staff are kept in the dark about the data: Management get to see customer service data all the time. They analyze the key indicators of service delivery every day as it passes across their desks. They see customer numbers falling; they take the calls and letters from the disgruntled public.

They can recite the facts and figures in their sleep. But often this information goes no further. And if the basic measurements of success are not shared with frontline folks, how can they know if they have failed?

2. The staff are kept in the dark about the business: Without a real understanding of the connection between customer service and the wellbeing of the company, staff won't appreciate why customer service makes such a difference.

They will know in general that customers need to be kept happy, but without specific business knowledge, they won't appreciate the bigger picture.

3. The staff don't OWN the level of service that they give: Staff need measurements that they can own. When staff own something and feel responsible for it, the difference in their performance can be amazing.

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So how can staff be brought up to speed?

Keep Staff Informed.

Share measurement results - good and bad - as they happen, and with every member of staff. Let them know when things have gone well and when things have got to change. Show them feedback surveys, reports that monitor customer calls, mystery shopper reports. Also, share the basics of business with every member of staff. Tell them what a retained customer/member means - how much it costs to find new customers compared to the savings of keeping them happy. Explain about lost market share, profits in jeopardy, failure.

Trust Employees to Understand.

Employees aren't stupid. They will "get" customer service, if information is shared. And not only will they understand about it, they will also, in most cases, care. Once that happens, customer service initiatives become more natural, and improvements are more likely to succeed. And of course it's a two way street. Frontline staff will be able to identify problem areas themselves, since they deal directly with the customers every day. Trusting staff with data and information is also the first step to instilling a sense of ownership.

Introduce Measurements that Staff can Own

Some organizations use a service level measurement such as the number of calls taken. Another option is to hold staff accountable for the retention of the customer. This is measurable in many ways and is truly a bottom line indicator - showing up in the profit and loss statement soon enough!

Over time, the best "key customer indicators" for staff to own can be determined and honed. Keep in mind though that being able to measure something doesn't necessarily mean it has any real impact on performance. Many years ago, the management team I worked for in a large call center introduced a "longest call to wait" measurement. It showed up on their daily reports and it became a real challenge for my staff and I to get them to focus on anything else. They were literally using up half their time on that one item, which meant that they were taking their eye off the ball - focusing, not on what was worth measuring, but on what they were capable of measuring. The fact was, day in and day out, one call was always going to be the longest call waiting; that was a certainty.

Once management and staff are talking the same customer service language, it's much easier to introduce change:

Changing the Status Quo.

When the current customer service direction isn't working, it is never easy to change it, because people don't really like change, especially if they can't see the need. But if staff have been kept informed - if they have access to the customer service data and an understanding of the business's needs - they will buy into the need to relinquish the established status quo.

Accepting a New Model.

Once staff can appreciate the importance of customer service, their focus shifts. They are ready to embrace a better way. Of course, constant support from the management is still needed. The reasons for the new "model" must be repeated in a compelling and believable way. Emphasize the rewards. Paint the bigger picture - gains in the market share for example, and securing the company's future.

Communication is the clever way to go. If everyone is kept in the loop, there will be fewer misunderstandings, fewer awkward moments, and hopefully fewer surprises.

About the Author: Neil Newcomb is a recognized authority on customer service, having spent 15 years managing customer service operations and call centers, and now running his own customer service solutions company, Event Learning LLC. Neil specializes in conducting seminars to improve customer service & relationships, and also works directly with management teams, helping them find ways to include customer service skills within their hiring process. You can email Neil at nnewcomb@eventlearning.com or call him on 1-800-450-0048. Also visit www.eventlearning.com to sign up for Event Learning's free newsletter, packed with essential information and tips.

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Employee Special Recognition Page



Robinn Parker

Office Assistant to the General Manager of the Fort Hood Exchange (AAFES).

Robinn came to Fort Hood in 1975 as a military spouse, her husband choosing Fort Hood as their retirement location. During her time as a military spouse, she worked with the Family Readiness Groups during Desert Storm/ Shield and was the recipient of the Joan D'Arc Award (top volunteerism award given by the United States Armor Association). She also volunteered at the Fort Hood Family Housing Office and was a Vice Mayor for Walker Village when the Mayoral program was stood up on Fort Hood.

She began working at the Fort Hood Exchange in August 1994, moved to the General Manager's office in 1997 and has held her current position since 2000.

Receiving many customer service related inquiries over the years, Robinn has been able to provide various levels of assistance to her customers. She also serves as an AAFES Public Affairs Rep, providing AAFES related information to the local community through various media platforms (such as for the Fort Hood Community Services (CSC) Counsel Meeting). In this capacity, she is in a position to provide a valuable service to Fort Hood Customers (Soldiers, Family members, retirees, civilians, etc.).



Jose L. Camps

Garrison Supply Technician

Jose Camps provides a variety of different services to the Garrison Command and other Installation Support Offices (ISOs), such as the Plans, Analysis and Integration Office (PAIO), Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO), the Resource Management Office, the Chaplain's Office and the Office of Internal Review.

Jose serves as a Property Accountability Officer, Credit Card Holder, Security Manager, Safety Manager, Training Coordinator, GFEBS Government Risk Compliance Approver, Work Order Coordinator, Budget Coordinator, Key Control Officer and Transportation Motor Pool Coordinator.

Jose also performs various other duties such as using the General Fund Enterprise Business System (GFEBS) for purchase requests and miscellaneous payments. He manages online programs such as the Joint Personnel Adjudication System (JPAS) and the Wide Area Workflow (WAWF) Program, a system used to complete receiving reports from numerous vendors.

Most people know who Jose is, but have no real concept of the depth of the duties and responsibilities he performs on a daily basis.



Burton E. Oliver, Jr.

QA Specialist/Logistics Supervisor
Directorate of Emergency Services

Burt Oliver has served the Fort Hood Community in a variety of ways over the years. He retired from the Army in 2003 as a Military Police First Sergeant, assigned here on Fort Hood. He now serves as a Logistics Supervisor and Quality Assurance Specialist for the Directorate of Emergency Services.

His duties mostly involve contract management for both the Police and Fire Departments. In addition, he performs duties as the DES Customer Service Officer, managing all customer service related feedback from the Interactive Customer Service (ICE) System for the various DES divisions.

Burt has had numerous years of customer service experience, previously serving as supervisor of the Welcome Center for four years. His main task was to bring services to the customers such as setting up numerous temporary satellite registration offices in the Division and III Corps areas of operation as well as set up TAPS seminars for Soldiers and their Family members.

Burt is one of those employees is seen by others as a "jack of all trades". If it needs to be done, he will go out and do it.

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The Funny Side of Customer Service:

This is a true story from the WordPerfect Helpline, which was transcribed from a recording monitoring the customer care department. Needless to say the Help Desk employee was fired. Actual dialogue of a former WordPerfect Customer Support employee:

Operator: *'Ridge Hall, computer assistance; may I help you?'*
Caller: *'Yes, well, I'm having trouble with WordPerfect.'*
Operator: *'What sort of trouble?'*
Caller: *'Well, I was just typing along, and all of a sudden the words went away.'*
Operator: *'Went away?'*
Caller: *'They disappeared'*
Operator: *'Hmm. So what does your screen look like now?'*
Caller: *'Nothing.'*
Operator: *'Nothing?'*
Caller: *'It's blank; it won't accept anything when I type.'*
Operator: *'Are you still in WordPerfect, or did you get out?'*
Caller: *'How do I tell?'*
Operator: *'Can you see the 'C: prompt' on the screen?'*
Caller: *'What's a sea-prompt?'*
Operator: *'Never mind, can you move your cursor around the screen?'*
Caller: *'There isn't any cursor; I told you, it won't accept anything I type.'*
Operator: *'Does your monitor have a power indicator??'*
Caller: *'What's a monitor?'*
Operator: *'It's the thing with the screen on it that looks like a TV. Does it have a little light that tells you when it's on?'*
Caller: *'I don't know.'*
Operator: *'Well, then look on the back of the monitor and find where the power cord goes into it. Can you see that?'*
Caller: *'Yes, I think so.'*
Operator: *'Great. Follow the cord to the plug, and tell me if it's plugged into the wall.'*
Caller: *'Yes, it is.'*
Operator: *'When you were behind the monitor, did you notice that there were two cables plugged into the back of it, not just one?'*
Caller: *'No.'*
Operator: *'Well, there are. I need you to look back there again and find the other cable.'*
Caller: *'Okay, here it is.'*
Operator: *'Follow it for me, and tell me if it's plugged securely into the back of your computer.'*
Caller: *'I can't reach.'*
Operator: *'OK. Well, can you see if it is?'*
Caller: *'No.'*
Operator: *'Even if you maybe put your knee on something and lean way over?'*
Caller: *'Well, it's not because I don't have the right angle – it's because it's dark.'*
Operator: *'Dark?'*
Caller: *'Yes – the office light is off, and the only light I have is coming in from the window.'*
Operator: *'Well, turn on the office light then.'*
Caller: *'I can't.'*
Operator: *'No? Why not?'*
Caller: *'Because there's a power failure.'*
Operator: *'A power ... A power failure? Aha. Okay, we've got it licked now. Do you still have the boxes and manuals and packing stuff that your computer came in?'*
Caller: *'Well, yes, I keep them in the closet.'*
Operator: *'Good. Go get them, and unplug your system and pack it up just like it was when you got it. Then take it back to the store you bought it from.'*
Caller: *'Really? Is it that bad?'*
Operator: *'Yes, I'm afraid it is.'*
Caller: *'Well, all right then, I suppose. What do I tell them?'*
Operator: *'Tell them you're too stupid to own a computer!'*

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When Things Go Wrong, Bounce Back! by Ron Kaufman

Capture the advantage behind your next service breakdown.

We all try to do things right. No business sets out to do wrong when servicing customers. But life is full of unexpected moments and inevitably, mistakes do happen. While many people in businesses focus on doing things right the first time, very few seem to take a powerful interest in setting things right when things do go wrong. In those moments, a passion for "zero defects" often gives way to "Let's get this mess cleaned up fast, and get back to business as usual."

Because of this attitude, businesses miss an important opportunity to build customer loyalty and valuable goodwill. It is exactly when things go wrong that customers are most sensitive about how they are treated, most likely to share their experiences with friends and colleagues, and most likely to make lasting decisions about whether to bring their future business back to a company, or to its rivals.

We know that mistakes will happen. What we do not know is how we will be treated when we go back to get the mistake corrected. "Will they treat me as if it is my fault?" "Will they argue with me?" "Will they make it difficult for me to prove my purchase, fill out papers, or otherwise file my complaint?"

In these unpleasant moments, customers' sensitivities are heightened. If they were casual shoppers before, they become discerning now. If they were discerning shoppers before, they become hyper-sensitive when things go wrong.

Make that sensitivity work in your favor. If service errors are quickly and professionally handled, customer loyalty can actually "bounce back" to higher heights.

Look at this example: You buy a pair of expensive shoes at a small boutique and pay cash. Go home and, eventually, you throw away the receipt. Two weeks later as you're walking down the street, the heel pops off and falls beyond reach into the drain below.

So you decide to return the expensive shoes back at the boutique. But of course you're a bit nervous since you've thrown away your cash receipt.

Now imagine the sales clerk welcoming you with a smile, and right away setting you at ease about not keeping your receipt. She promptly gives you a new pair of shoes and then adds in a free pair of matching socks "to thank you for coming back, and to apologize for the inconvenience".

Would you return to that boutique again in the future? Would you recommend that boutique to your friends? Of course you would. Your loyalty has actually gone up because you had a service problem and it was well handled.

This is the key point: when things go wrong, you have a tremendous opportunity to build more customer loyalty just by quickly and generously setting things right.

Use these seven simple steps to gain customer loyalty by "Bouncing Back" with S-E-R-V-I-C-E recovery.

S-ay You're Sorry: There's nothing like a sincere apology, delivered right away, to let people know you really care. There's no need to grovel, nor apologize forever. One honest and heartfelt apology will suffice.

E-xpedite Solutions: The faster you can fix the problem, the better. This is not the time to calculate the cost of repairing the damage. Do what it takes to set things right. Costs will be forgotten or absorbed over time, but benefits last forever.

R-espond to the Customer: Remember, people are involved, not just products, dates and orders. Take the time to empathize. Be a listening ear. Keep personal contact; use the phone, send a fax, stay in touch. And when it's all over, thank them personally with a note, small gift or other special gesture.

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V-ictory to the Customer: Build higher levels of customer loyalty by giving more than what they expect. Refunds, discounts, special assistance, extra services; it doesn't have to be money! But whatever it is, do it fast. No loyalty is gained from a refund or gesture that takes months to negotiate, authorize or discuss.

I-mplement Improvements: Change your processes and improve training to avoid the problem next time. Institutionalize improvements.

C-ommunicate Results: Spread the word so that everyone can learn from what happened. Provide full information about consequences and improvements.

E-xtend the Outcome: Don't stop working when they stop complaining. Stay in touch until you are sure the customer comes back and their long-term loyalty is assured. What else can you do to keep your customers coming back for more? Make it easy for your customers to complain! Create new ways for customers to let you know what's wrong.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

1. Set up a telephone hotline for immediate response to customer comments and complaints.
2. Give counter staff the power to take prompt and significant actions for your customers.
3. Conduct focus groups with a cross-section of customers to find out what they want you to improve.
4. Run surveys to keep track of your customers' changing expectations. Find out what customers are buying now, and what they want in the future. Provide easy-to-use "comment cards" at all points of customer contact. Insert them in outgoing mail. Show your appreciation for responses, and reply fast.
5. Become a customer of your best competitors. Eagerly seek out what they do better or differently than you. Then make appropriate improvements in your business operation.
6. Long-term, loyal customers lead to lower costs, repeat orders, frequent referrals and expanding profit margins. Losing one of these precious patrons is much more costly than the revenue from a single sale!
7. Service recovery does cost money (although a sincere apology costs nothing and goes a long way towards appeasing upset customers). But perhaps service recovery shouldn't be seen as a cost at all?!
8. "Bouncing Back!" through generous service recovery is a proven strategy for building repeat business and long-term sustainable profits. It's not a cost... it's an intelligent business investment.

About the Author: Copyright Ron Kaufman. Visit: www.RonKaufman.com for more information.



"People hate the rich. I need to make some bad investments, bankrupt my company, fire everyone and go out of business so people will like me again."



"How would you like your alphabet soup... Helvetica, Courier Bold or Comic Sans?"



"It was bound to happen. The computers can't get anything done without having a bunch of meetings first!"

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All Kinds of People Deserve Great Customer Service



"Hey mom, let me help you with that. You're going to break a finger nail!"

**IT'S ALL ABOUT
THE CUSTOMER
SERVICE!**



Author: Dale W. Cowan
Management Analyst, PAIO
dale.cowan@us.army.mil
(254) 288-6260